

Take a Second Look When Those Tax Bills Arrive

By PHILIP E. WATSON
County Assessor

That time of year when property tax bills appear in our mailboxes is upon us once more.

Most of us only look at one thing on the bill — the total dollar amount that local government has apportioned to

us as our individual share of the tax burden.

It's an understandable and instinctive reaction. After all, it's the total amount that counts in terms of out-of-pocket payment.

For many taxpayers, the next move is equally understandable and instinctive.

They call or write our office to protest that their taxes have gone up.

HOWEVER, I urge everyone to take a second look at his bill before reaching for the phone or picking up a pen.

On the left-hand side of the bill is a box headed, "Assessed Valuations." This is the only portion of the tax bill over which my Department has any control or responsibility. The total of the land and improvement assessed values shown there, multiplied by four, will give you our opinion of the market value of your property. If you honestly believe this total value is too high, you have a valid protest and we urge you to file a petition for a lowered assessment with the Tax Appeals Board.

However, if the total value appears fair, we have done our job properly and there is no grounds for an appeal. Even if, in your judgment, the total amount of taxes due seems too high, there is no body to which an appeal on taxes can be made. Despite its name, the Tax Appeals Board can only deal with complaints on value.

THE AGENCIES responsible for the total amount of your tax bill appear just to the right of the assessment information — in the box headed "Rates and Distribution of Amounts by Taxing Agencies."

If you live in a city which levies taxes (other than Pasadena or Long Beach where the city bills you separately), the first agency listed is the city, with its rate and the amount of your total taxes that go into the city treasury.

The second agency is the county. Next are the schools, and after them, any special districts that are authorized to tax your property.

An examination of what agencies receive your tax dollars — and how much

each receives — shows two significant points that are frequently overlooked.

IN ALMOST every community, at least half, and sometimes more, of your entire taxes go to support your local schools. The single item of education, then, is responsible for 50 per cent of property taxes.

Russian Trawlers Concern San Pedro Fish Interests

Confirmed reports that Russian fishing trawlers are operating off the Southern California coastline have created considerable concern in San Pedro, Assemblyman Vincent Thomas (D-68th District) said today.

"Official Navy statements that at least one such trawler has been cruising 15 miles northeast of Santa Catalina Island within the past few days bear out all our warnings of previous years," Thomas said. Thomas said the reports do not indicate whether the Russian vessels actually are fishing or still investigating the extent of fish resources in the area.

"But we do know that our large untapped populations of hake and anchovy are drawing increasing attention from foreign fishing interests," Thomas declared.

The assemblyman said he was "making every attempt" to gather more information about the Russian threat. He said the matter is of "immediate concern to all commercial and sports fishing enthusiasts."

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